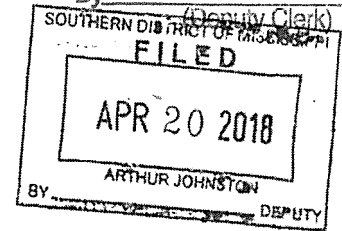


FILED
Clerk
District Court

JUL 06 2018

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI
NORTHERN DIVISION**

for the Northern Mariana Islands
By _____



**SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE
COMMISSION,**

Plaintiff,

v.

**ARTHUR LAMAR ADAMS AND
MADISON TIMBER PROPERTIES, LLC,**

Defendants,

MC 18-00011

Case No. 3:18-cv-252-DPJ-FKB

JURY DEMAND

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff, Securities and Exchange Commission (the “Commission”), files its complaint and alleges that:

SUMMARY

1. Beginning in approximately 2004, Defendant Arthur Lamar Adams (“Adams”), through his wholly-owned company, Madison Timber Properties, LLC (“MT Properties”), committed securities fraud by operating a Ponzi scheme. Adams and MT Properties have raised at least \$85 million from over 150 investors in multiple states.

2. Adams told investors that their money would be used by MT Properties to acquire timber-harvesting rights from various land owners on behalf of investors. The company allegedly would later harvest the timber and pay investors with the profits. In fact, Adams operated the venture as a Ponzi scheme, paying earlier investors with funds obtained from newer investors. He also used invested funds for a variety of inappropriate ends, including personal expenses and to fund real estate investments.

3. By the conduct detailed in this Complaint, Adams and MT Properties violated Section 17(a) of the Securities Act of 1933 (“Securities Act”) [15 U.S.C. § 77q(a)], Section 10(b) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 (“Exchange Act”) [15 U.S.C. § 78j(b)] and Rule 10b-5 [17 C.F.R. § 240.10b-5] thereunder. Unless enjoined, Adams and MT Properties are likely to commit such violations again in the future.

4. The Commission seeks a judgment from the Court: (a) freezing defendants’ assets pending final adjudication of the Commission’s claims; (b) finding that Adams and MT Properties violated the antifraud provisions of the federal securities laws; (c) enjoining Adams and MT Properties from engaging in future violations of the antifraud provisions of the federal securities laws; (d) ordering Adams and MT Properties to disgorge his ill-gotten gains described herein, with prejudgment interest; and (e) ordering Adams and MT Properties to

pay a civil monetary penalty pursuant to Section 20(d) of the Securities Act [15 U.S.C. § 77t(d)] and Section 21(d) of the Exchange Act [15 U.S.C. § 78u(d)].

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

5. The Commission brings this action pursuant to Sections 20(b) and 20(d) of the Securities Act [15 U.S.C. §§ 77t(b) and 77t(d)] and Section 21(d) the Exchange Act [15 U.S.C. § 78u(d)].

6. The Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to Sections 20(b), 20(d) and 22(a) of the Securities Act [15 U.S.C. §§ 77t(b), 77t(d), and 77v(a)], and Sections 21(d), 21(e), and 27 of the Exchange Act [15 U.S.C. §§ 78u(d), 78u(e), and 78aa].

7. Adams and MT Properties, directly or indirectly, used the means or instruments of interstate commerce, the mails, or the facilities of a national securities exchange in connection with the acts described herein.

8. Venue is proper under Section 22 of the Securities Act [15 U.S.C. § 77v], Section 27 of the Exchange Act [15 U.S.C. § 78aa] and 28 U.S.C. § 1391 because a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claims made herein occurred in the Southern District of Mississippi. In addition, Adams resides in, and MT Properties has its principal place of business in, Madison MS, which is within the Southern District.

DEFENDANTS

9. **Arthur Lamar Adams**, age 58, lives in Madison, Mississippi. He is the founder and president of MT Properties.

10. **Madison Timber Properties, LLC** is a Mississippi limited liability company that has its principal place of business in Madison, Mississippi. It is wholly-owned by Adams.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

11. MT Properties purports to be a timber harvesting company.

12. Starting in at least 2004, Defendants began raising funds through the sale of promissory note investments. The sale of these promissory notes has continued until April 19, 2018.

13. In general, the promissory notes are for a one-year period and offer an annual return of 12%-15%, which is paid back over the course of the year. At the end of the year, investors can either have their principle returned or rolled over into a new investment.

14. When soliciting investors, Defendants told investors that MT Properties would use the funds to secure and harvest timber from specific tracts of land that owned by third parties. The tracts of land were usually located in Alabama, Florida, or Mississippi.

15. Defendants also told investors that they would generate the investment returns from the sale of the harvested timber. Finally, many investors were told that they had the sole rights to the specific land tracks, and that no one else would be able to harvest the timber on that land.

16. The Proposed Defendants raised at least \$85,000,000 through the sale of these securities to approximately 150 investors located primarily in the southeastern United States.

17. As part of this “Timber Scheme” the Proposed Defendants provides the investor with a (1) promissory note; (2) timber deed and cutting agreement; (3) security agreement; (4) tract summary that includes the value of the timber on the property; and (5) a title search certificate.

18. MT Properties never obtained the harvesting rights to the land as claimed. In most cases, Adams forged the timber deed and cutting agreements. Adams also forged the documents purportedly showing the value of the timber on the land tracks. Further, Adams would pledge the same land tracts (which he did not actually have the rights to) to multiple parties. Finally, in most cases, the specific land tracks did not have the value of timber as promised or did not in fact have any harvestable timber.

19. Instead of using the investor funds generated by the Timber Scheme to acquire timber rights and harvest the timber, Adams used the funds for his own

benefit. Additionally, Adams began constructing real estate developments near Oxford and Starkville, Mississippi. Investors were not told about this real estate development and had no knowledge that their funds would be used support it. Further, the investors have no legal interest in the real estate developments.

20. In addition, Defendants used funds from new investors to pay the returns owed to existing investors.

COUNT I – FRAUD IN THE PURCHASE OR SALE OF SECURITIES

**Violations of Section 10(b) of the Exchange Act and Rule 10b-5 Thereunder
[15 U.S.C. § 78j(b); 17 C.F.R. § 240.10b-5]**

21. The Commission realleges and reincorporates paragraphs 1 through 20 as if fully set forth herein.

22. Since approximately 2004, Defendants, in connection with the purchase or sale of securities, by use of means or instrumentalities of interstate commerce or of the mails, or of any facility of any national securities exchange, directly or indirectly:

(a) made untrue statements of material facts and omitted to state facts necessary to make the statements made, in light of the circumstances under which they were made, not misleading; or

(b) engaged in acts, practices or courses of business which operated or would operate as a fraud or deceit.

23. Defendants' misrepresentations, omissions, and acts, practices or courses of business which operated as a fraud or deceit were material.

24. Defendants acted with scienter by knowingly or with severe recklessness making the above-referenced misrepresentations and omissions, and engaging in acts, practices or courses of business which operated as a fraud or deceit.

25. By reason of the actions alleged herein, Defendants violated Section 10(b) of the Exchange Act [15 U.S.C. § 78j(b)] and Rule 10b-5 thereunder [17 C.F.R. § 240.10b-5].

COUNT II –FRAUD IN THE OFFER OR SALE OF SECURITIES

**Violations of Section 17(a) of the Securities Act
[15 U.S.C. § 77q(a)(1)]**

26. The Commission realleges and reincorporates paragraphs 1 through 20 as if fully set forth herein.

27. Since approximately 2004, Defendants, directly or indirectly, in the offer or sale of securities, by use of any means or instruments of transportation or communication in interstate commerce or by use of the mails, employed a device, scheme or artifice to defraud.

28. Defendants' misrepresentations, omissions, and acts, practices or courses of business which operated as a fraud or deceit were material.

29. Defendants acted with scienter by knowingly or with severe recklessness making the above-referenced misrepresentations and omissions, and engaging in acts, practices or courses of business which operated as a fraud or deceit. Defendants also acted negligently.

30. By reason of the actions alleged herein, Defendants violated Section 17(a) of the Securities Act [15 U.S.C. § 77q(a)].

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, the Commission respectfully requests that the Court enter a judgment:

(i) finding that Defendants violated the antifraud provisions of the federal securities laws as alleged herein;

(ii) permanently enjoining Defendants from violating Section 17(a) of the Securities Act [15 U.S.C. § 77q(a)], Section 10(b) of the Exchange Act [15 U.S.C. § 78j(b)] and Rule 10b-5 thereunder [17 C.F.R. § 240.10b-5];

(iii) freezing defendants' assets, expediting discovery and preventing the destruction of documents pending resolution of this litigation

(iv) ordering Defendants to disgorge their ill-gotten gains and to pay prejudgment interest thereon;

(v) ordering Defendants to pay a civil monetary penalty pursuant to Section 20(d) of the Securities Act [15 U.S.C. § 77t(d)] and Section 21(d) of the Exchange Act [15 U.S.C. § 78u(d); and

(vi) granting such other relief as this Court may deem just and proper.

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Pursuant to Rule 38 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, the Commission demands trial by jury in this action of all issues so triable.

Dated this 20th day of April, 2018.

Respectfully submitted,

s/ W. Shawn Murnahan

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CIVIL COVER SHEET

3:18-cv-252-WJ-EKB

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS

U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission
950 East Paces Ferry Road, N.E., Suite 900, Atlanta, GA 30324

(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff

(EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)

DEFENDANTS

ARTHUR LAMAR ADAMS AND MADISON TIMBER PROPERTIES,

County of Residence of First Listed Defendant

Madison Co., MS

(IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)

NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.

(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number)

W. Shawn Murnahan (ph: 404-842-7669), M. Graham Loomis
U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission
950 East Paces Ferry Road, N.E., Suite 900, Atlanta, GA 30324

ARTHUR JOHNSTON

Attorneys (If Known)

John M. Colette, 109 E. Capitol Street, Suite 475, Jackson, MS 39201
(601) 335-6277

II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- ☒ 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff
☐ 2 U.S. Government Defendant
☐ 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party)
☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)

III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant)

- | | PTF | DEF | | PTF | DEF |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Citizen of This State | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | Incorporated or Principal Place of Business In This State | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| Citizen of Another State | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | Incorporated and Principal Place of Business In Another State | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | Foreign Nation | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 |

IV. NATURE OF SUIT (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

Click here for: Nature of Suit Code Descriptions.

CONTRACT	TORTS	FORFEITURE/PENALTY	BANKRUPTCY	OTHER STATUTES	
<input type="checkbox"/> 110 Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> 120 Marine <input type="checkbox"/> 130 Miller Act <input type="checkbox"/> 140 Negotiable Instrument <input type="checkbox"/> 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment <input type="checkbox"/> 151 Medicare Act <input type="checkbox"/> 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Excludes Veterans) <input type="checkbox"/> 153 Recovery of Overpayment of Veteran's Benefits <input type="checkbox"/> 160 Stockholders' Suits <input type="checkbox"/> 190 Other Contract <input type="checkbox"/> 195 Contract Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 196 Franchise	PERSONAL INJURY <input type="checkbox"/> 310 Airplane <input type="checkbox"/> 315 Airplane Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 320 Assault, Libel & Slander <input type="checkbox"/> 330 Federal Employers' Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 340 Marine <input type="checkbox"/> 345 Marine Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 350 Motor Vehicle <input type="checkbox"/> 355 Motor Vehicle Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 360 Other Personal Injury <input type="checkbox"/> 362 Personal Injury - Medical Malpractice	<input type="checkbox"/> 365 Personal Injury - Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 367 Health Care/Pharmaceutical Personal Injury Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 368 Asbestos Personal Injury Product Liability PERSONAL PROPERTY <input type="checkbox"/> 370 Other Fraud <input type="checkbox"/> 371 Truth in Lending <input type="checkbox"/> 380 Other Personal Property Damage <input type="checkbox"/> 385 Property Damage Product Liability	<input type="checkbox"/> 625 Drug Related Seizure of Property 21 USC 881 <input type="checkbox"/> 690 Other LABOR <input type="checkbox"/> 710 Fair Labor Standards Act <input type="checkbox"/> 720 Labor/Management Relations <input type="checkbox"/> 740 Railway Labor Act <input type="checkbox"/> 751 Family and Medical Leave Act <input type="checkbox"/> 790 Other Labor Litigation <input type="checkbox"/> 791 Employee Retirement Income Security Act IMMIGRATION <input type="checkbox"/> 462 Naturalization Application <input type="checkbox"/> 465 Other Immigration Actions	<input type="checkbox"/> 422 Appeal 28 USC 158 <input type="checkbox"/> 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157 PROPERTY RIGHTS <input type="checkbox"/> 820 Copyrights <input type="checkbox"/> 830 Patent <input type="checkbox"/> 835 Patent - Abbreviated New Drug Application <input type="checkbox"/> 840 Trademark SOCIAL SECURITY <input type="checkbox"/> 861 HIA (1395ff) <input type="checkbox"/> 862 Black Lung (923) <input type="checkbox"/> 863 DIWC/DIWW (405(g)) <input type="checkbox"/> 864 SSID Title XVI <input type="checkbox"/> 865 RSI (405(g))	<input type="checkbox"/> 375 False Claims Act <input type="checkbox"/> 376 Qui Tam (31 USC 3729(a)) <input type="checkbox"/> 400 State Reapportionment <input type="checkbox"/> 410 Antitrust <input type="checkbox"/> 430 Banks and Banking <input type="checkbox"/> 450 Commerce <input type="checkbox"/> 460 Deportation <input type="checkbox"/> 470 Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations <input type="checkbox"/> 480 Consumer Credit <input type="checkbox"/> 490 Cable/Sat TV <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 850 Securities/Commodities/Exchange <input type="checkbox"/> 890 Other Statutory Actions <input type="checkbox"/> 891 Agricultural Acts <input type="checkbox"/> 893 Environmental Matters <input type="checkbox"/> 895 Freedom of Information Act <input type="checkbox"/> 896 Arbitration <input type="checkbox"/> 899 Administrative Procedure Act/Review or Appeal of Agency Decision <input type="checkbox"/> 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes
REAL PROPERTY <input type="checkbox"/> 210 Land Condemnation <input type="checkbox"/> 220 Foreclosure <input type="checkbox"/> 230 Rent Lease & Ejectment <input type="checkbox"/> 240 Torts to Land <input type="checkbox"/> 245 Tort Product Liability <input type="checkbox"/> 290 All Other Real Property	CIVIL RIGHTS <input type="checkbox"/> 440 Other Civil Rights <input type="checkbox"/> 441 Voting <input type="checkbox"/> 442 Employment <input type="checkbox"/> 443 Housing/Accommodations <input type="checkbox"/> 445 Amer. w/Disabilities - Employment <input type="checkbox"/> 446 Amer. w/Disabilities - Other <input type="checkbox"/> 448 Education	PRISONER PETITIONS Habeas Corpus: <input type="checkbox"/> 463 Alien Detainee <input type="checkbox"/> 510 Motions to Vacate Sentence <input type="checkbox"/> 530 General <input type="checkbox"/> 535 Death Penalty Other: <input type="checkbox"/> 540 Mandamus & Other <input type="checkbox"/> 550 Civil Rights <input type="checkbox"/> 555 Prison Condition <input type="checkbox"/> 560 Civil Detainee - Conditions of Confinement			

V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- ☒ 1 Original Proceeding
☐ 2 Removed from State Court
☐ 3 Remanded from Appellate Court
☐ 4 Reinstated or Reopened
☐ 5 Transferred from Another District (specify)
☐ 6 Multidistrict Litigation - Transfer
☐ 8 Multidistrict Litigation - Direct File

VI. CAUSE OF ACTION

Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing (Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity):

15 U.S.C. § 77q(a), 15 U.S.C. § 78i(b), and 17 C.F.R. § 240.10b-5

Brief description of cause:

Violations of the antifraud provisions of the federal securities laws

VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:

☐ CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER RULE 23, F.R.Cv.P.

DEMAND \$

CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint:

JURY DEMAND: ☒ Yes ☐ No

VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY

(See instructions):

JUDGE

DOCKET NUMBER

DATE

04/20/2018

SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD

s/ W. Shawn Murnahan

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

RECEIPT # _____ AMOUNT _____ APPLYING IFP _____ JUDGE _____ MAG. JUDGE _____